

HERSTMONCEUX PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: Committee Reports – F&GP

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on **Wednesday 05 August 2015** at Herstmonceux Village Hall, Hailsham Road, Herstmonceux.

Present: Councillors: Mrs J. Angear, M. Bradshaw, M. Goodsell, Mrs H. Kenward, S. Nash, I. Stewart.

S. Goacher, RFO, attended and took the Minutes.

Members of the Public: None.

Apologies Received: None.

FGP.1.08.15 Annual Grants Report: See the Annual Grant Report (Attached).
Recommendations Proposed: Councillor Nash, Seconded: Councillor Mrs Kenward. All Members in favour.

FGP.2.08.15 Payments of Account Report: The matter had be raised by Councillor Bradshaw with the RFO in a general context regarding Finance Reports, and the meeting discussed and would **RECOMMEND** the scheduling of the 'Payments of Accounts' Report to be sent out, and included with other paperwork, with the Agenda for Full Council by the Clerk each month.

To facilitate this, the Finance Officer will be closing the receipt of invoices for payment on 9th of each month, which will provide up to a four day period in which to provide the Clerk with the report. A paragraph providing suppliers with the new deadline for receipt of invoices, to ensure payment within the current month, will be built into the standard letters sent with cheques, and on Works Orders raised, in future. Proposed: by Councillor Bradshaw, seconded by Councillor Mrs Kenward. All Members in favour.

FGP.3.08.15 Internal Auditors Report Recommendations: The meeting noted that the RFO, together with the Clerk, will be looking at the recommendations of the Internal Auditor, particularly in respect of the new requirements that need to have Systems and/or Documentation in place.

- 1. Employees' Code of Conduct. A draft Template has been passed to the Clerk as a guide*
- 2. Procedure documented re Responses to Consultation Requests*
- 3. Procedure documented re the handling of correspondence, circulation, responses, filing and retention*
- 4. Procedure (documentation not required) agreed re the recording and monitoring of Councillors' Gifts/Hospitality received*
- 5. Procedure (documentation not required) agreed re the monitoring of Grants or Loans made or received*

These documents will be brought to future meetings of the F&GP Committee so as to be completed by 31 March 2016.

In respect of backing up the Parish Council's financial Accounts, apart from the RFO backing these up to four separate external hard drives within his own residence, expert guidance, via the Council's Webmaster is being sought to be able to back-up to the Council's 'Dropbox' Cloud space from the RFO's computer system.

The Assets Register has been updated with regard to the Recreation Ground and Village Green, both valued at £1.

FGP.4.08.15 Committee Estimate Templates: The RFO brought to the meeting an idea raised by Councillor Bradshaw that Committee 'Templates' should be introduced as part

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of the Estimate process. Councillor Bradshaw elaborated on his idea by explaining that there should be a standard 'Template' set up for each Committee on which it communicates its aims, objectives and projects for the ensuing three year period. The Committee would set down its financial requirements which would be incorporated into the Estimates for the ensuing year with projections for a further two years beyond, by the RFO. These 'templates' would become an integral record of the Parish Council allied to and in support of the Councils Estimates for the year. The meeting felt that this was generally a good idea and would **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that Councillor Bradshaw and the RFO work on producing the standard template for each of the Parish Council's committees and that these are introduced during September 2015.

FGP.5.08.15 An Emergency Item – Arising from the ROSPA Report: Councillor Nash brought to the attention of the meeting that there was two major items arising from the recent ROSPA report.

1. The Skateboard / BMX Park: there are general maintenance issues which could be classed as dangerous, and which have been highlighted by the ROSPA report. Councillor Nash had contacted Agrifactors Ltd and obtained an estimate of approx. £750 to carry out the necessary work. The meeting **APPROVED** this expenditure on the basis of the Health & Safety aspects to users of the park.
2. The Youth Shelter has a potential trip hazard where the lip is becoming exposed due to wear and tear on the surrounding ground. This work is not deemed to have any immediate Health & Safety impact but requires a solution to be found and remedial action taken. Councillor Nash, again, had obtained an estimate of approx. £500. The meeting **RECOMMENDS** to Full Council that this is further investigated as soon as possible and all necessary work be carried out.

Proposed: by Councillor Stewart, Seconded: by Councillor Bradshaw. All Members in favour.

FGP.6.08.15 Tendering for Contracts: The RFO brought to the meeting a suggestion raised by Councillor Nash in respect of the letting of Contracts for more than one year at a time, for (say) up to three years. The RFO stated that he was in favour of this suggestion provided there was in place the following:

1. A Specification in place for each Contract drawn up by the Parish Council requiring Public Liability Insurance cover, adherence to all Health & Safety requirements and all necessary Risk Assessments to be carried out by the Contractor and be available for inspection by the Parish Council.
2. The Contractor to build in and identify any increases to the yearly contract for the second and third years.
3. That a clause in the specification permits the Parish Council to withdraw from the contract if either the work is not undertaken at the agreed standard, or that the Contractor is not adhering to Health & Safety Standards or Risk Assessment criteria.

The meeting were in favour of this move to extended contracts and would **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that this is introduced on major contracts as for the financial year 2016-17, i.e. from the next tendering process during 2015-16.

Proposed: by Councillor Stewart, Seconded: by Councillor Mrs Kenward. All Members in favour.

FGP.7.08.15 Contract Tendering & Estimate Processes: The RFO brought to the meeting a suggestion that there should be a 'dovetailing' of the Contract Tendering and the Estimate processes. This would ensure that wherever possible to figures that are used in the Annual Estimates are 'actual', rather than 'provisional'. This would mean a change to Parish Council administration in that the Contract specifications

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would need to be reviewed and agreed by Committees and Full Council by the end of September, so that Contractors and an advertisement could be placed during beginning of October with a view of receiving tenders back by the mid/end of November.

The meeting felt that this was a sensible move and provided that all tendering regulations could be met that it is **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council that the move to Contract Tendering be undertaken as from September (in future years), October this year, to ensure more accurate estimating is accomplished in future.

Proposed: by Councillor Bradshaw, Seconded: by Councillor Stewart. All Members in favour.

- FGP.8.08.15** **The Council Year (Schedule of Actions):** The RFO had picked up on the 'handout' produced by the Three Counties Training as a possible solution to scheduling and linking the Parish Council's work requirements to the meeting schedule. The RFO brought to the table a suggested Council Year schedule for Herstmonceux Parish Council whereby monthly actions for Full Council and its Committees, The Clerk, and the RFO were clearly identified. The idea was to be able to produce a schedule of actions and requirements for the whole calendar year so that Members and Officers alike would know what is required of or is to come before Full Council or any of its Committees on a monthly basis, thus leading to better planning of the Council's work over the year.

The document produced by the RFO was a discussion document only at this stage and did not include any actions or requirements of the Clerk. The meeting discussed the schedule and agreed that it was a good idea and would assist in the work of the Council by providing a 'calendar' of work for both Members and Officers alike.

The meeting **RECOMMENDS** that the Clerk should complete that part of the schedule in respect of the Clerk's post, and that the completed schedule should be referred to a future meeting of F&GP before being adopted by Full Council.

The meeting further **RECOMMENDS** that the Parish Council organise and adopt the inclusion of a Public Meeting to be held in October 2015, at which residents can come along and share the estimate provisions and new expenditure initiatives, and obtain the views of the community.

Proposed: by Councillor Bradshaw, Seconded: by Councillor Mrs Kenward. All Members in favour.

- FGP.9.08.15** **Close of Meeting:** The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 21.30 hours.